

The Copywriting Calculator

PRICING ADVICE FOR COPYWRITERS

**HOW TO PRICE YOUR COPYWRITING PROJECTS CORRECTLY TO
MAXIMIZE YOUR PROFITS**



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HOW TO GROW YOUR COPYWRITING BUSINESS

PRICING FOR PROFITS

Copywriting isn't just about crafting persuasive words—it's about running a profitable business. And that starts with knowing how to price your work in a way that reflects your skill, effort, and the value you bring to your clients.

Too many copywriters undercharge, either because they don't know their worth or they haven't broken down the real inputs that go into a project. It's not just about the time spent typing—it's everything else, too. Your pricing should account for:

- Writing speed (WPM) – How fast can you write high-quality copy?
- Revisions – How many rounds are included, and how long does it take you to revise?
- Consultations – Do you factor in client meetings and strategy sessions?
- Research & competitor analysis – Are you bringing insights to the table, not just words?



HOW TO GROW YOUR COPYWRITING BUSINESS

PRICING FOR PROFITS

And don't forget: even if your pricing makes sense today, it shouldn't stay the same forever. As you gain experience, develop a specialty, or get more demand, your rates should reflect that growth.

The Social Proof Challenge (And How to Navigate It as a Ghostwriter)

One of the best ways to raise your rates is through social proof—testimonials, case studies, and past work. But if you're ghostwriting, getting credit can be tricky. Some clients might be willing to provide a discreet testimonial, especially if you frame it as a review of your process rather than the specific work. Others might allow you to share an anonymized case study. Find ways to showcase your value without breaking confidentiality.

Don't Just Do the Work—Upsell by Adding More Value

Your clients don't just need words—they need results. And that's where you can set yourself apart. Instead of just delivering what's asked, think like a strategist.

- What's their biggest marketing goal?
- What are their competitors doing?
- What additional assets could help them succeed?

For example, if you're writing website copy for a client, suggest an email sequence to go with it. If they're launching a new product, mock up a sample lead magnet or eBook to help them build their email list. Show them that you're not just a writer—you're a growth partner.

That's how you turn one-off projects into ongoing client relationships. That's how you command higher fees. And that's how you build a sustainable, profitable copywriting business.

Now, let's dive into the numbers and get your pricing strategy locked in.

Introduction

PRICING

WELCOME TO THE BUSINESS OF COPYWRITING

A Workbook for Smart Pricing and Growth





Welcome to the Business of Copywriting

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Chapter One

PRICING

THE PRICE OF COPYWRITING: ESTIMATING RESEARCH TIME

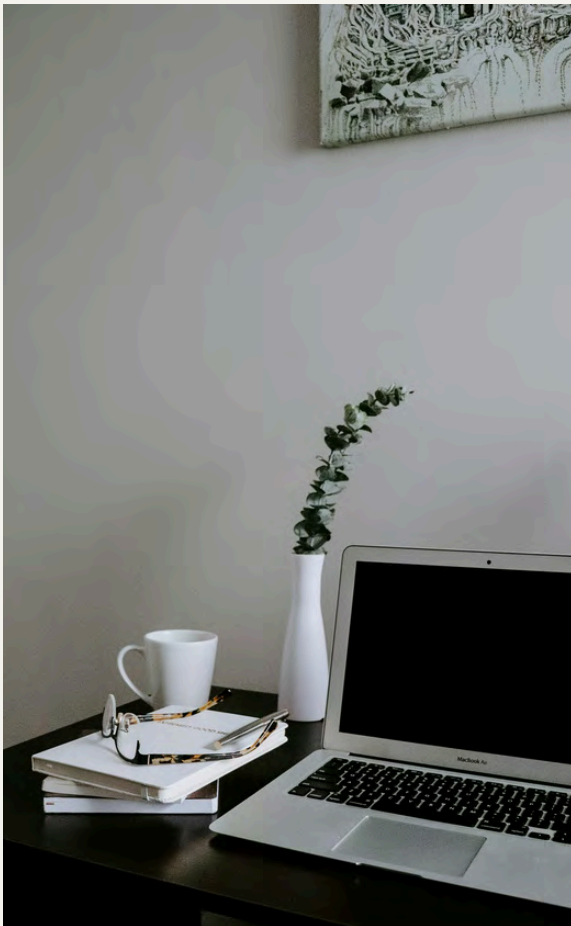
(And how to ask clients for clarity.)



How to Estimate Research Time

First things first: don't guess how long research will take. And definitely don't shrug and say, *I have no idea*. Instead, ask your client directly—professionally and strategically. Something simple works:

"I'm really excited about this project and want to make sure I provide a well-researched, valuable piece without going overboard. Could you let me know how many sources you'd like, or what types of sources you prefer? That way, I can focus on what's most useful to you."



Once you have their response, take a few minutes to skim the kinds of sources they expect. Are they asking for easy-to-read blogs and magazine articles? Or are they pointing you toward dense academic papers, technical guides, or industry reports?

- If it's light research, you might only need 30–60 minutes to pull key insights.
- If it's moderate research, involving industry trends or expert sources, you might need 2–3 hours.
- If it's heavy research (deep industry knowledge, medical or legal topics, etc.), factor in several hours or even days.

Chapter Two

PRICING

THE PRICE OF COPYWRITING: OUTLINING

The Overlooked Time Factor





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“If I waited for perfection, I would never write a word.” – Margaret Atwood

Outlining is key. Unless it is very short form content, it will be much more efficient to outline before drafting. My estimates below are based on both expert level speed, but I'll also include beginner-friendly suggested times so you can adjust based on your experience.

Not sure where you land? Practice. Pick a dream client's industry, create a mock project, and time yourself. If you're new, practicing the full process—including research, outlining, and writing—is one of the best ways to improve.

For **shorter content** (under 1,500 words):

- Under 500 words → Just a few bullet points. (Expert: 5 min | Beginner: 10-15 min)
- 500-1,500 words → Keep it light. (Expert: 15 min max | Beginner: 20-30 min)
- This will cover most blogging, email sequences, landing pages, and similar work.

For **mid-range content** (1,500–3,000 words):

- 1,500–3,000 words → Plan more structure, especially if it's persuasive or complex.
- (Expert: 15 min per 1,000 words | Beginner: 30–45 min per 1,000 words)
- This is common for in-depth blog posts, case studies, and website pillar content.

For **long-form content** (3,000+ words, eBooks, whitepapers):

- 3,000–6,000 words → A strong outline prevents a chaotic draft.
 - (Expert: 20–30 min per 1,500 words | Beginner: 45–60 min per 1,500 words)
- 6,000–8,000 words (eBook range) → This is where I start outlining with the client.
 - (Expert: 1–2 hours | Beginner: 2–4 hours)
- Beyond 8,000 words (Full eBook, course content, etc.) → The longer the project, the more structured the outline needs to be.
 - (Expert: 2–4 hours | Beginner: 4–6+ hours)

The key with long-form content is avoiding major structural edits after you've written thousands of words. You do not want to be shifting sections around after drafting—it's an exhausting, avoidable mess. Invest time upfront in a solid outline so your writing flows from the start.

Pro Tip:

When you can explain your outlining process to a client, you justify a higher price. Many clients don't realize how much planning goes into strong writing. Instead of just saying: "This project is \$2,000."

You can say:

"That price covers X hours of research, X time outlining, X WPM for drafting, plus revisions. I also make sure the content is structured strategically so it's not just well-written, but actually works for your audience."

Breaking it down makes it clear that you're not just throwing out a random number—you're charging for real, structured work.

What About Website Copy?

Website copy takes much longer to get right than most people expect. Unlike a standalone blog post, website content needs to flow between pages, match a brand's tone, and guide the user toward specific actions. If you're working with a designer (which you should be unless you're also wireframing), the copy may need to be adjusted to fit certain layouts.

- **Homepages & Landing Pages:** Often the hardest to write because every word counts. Clarity, conversion strategy, and tone all need to align.
- **Service & Product Pages:** These need strong messaging that highlights benefits, addresses objections, and leads into a CTA seamlessly.
- **About Pages & Bios:** Tone is everything here. It has to sound personal yet professional, and match the company's overall voice.



Time Estimates for Website Copy

- Simple website (3-5 pages, light revisions) → (Expert: 4-6 hours | Beginner: 8-12+ hours)
- Larger site (10+ pages, complex brand voice, heavy revisions) → (Expert: 10-20 hours | Beginner: 20-30+ hours)
- Full website with wireframing → Add even more time, depending on how deep you go into the UX side.

Website copy is an iterative process, meaning you'll likely tweak it several times before it's final. That's why charging by the project (rather than hourly) is almost always the better approach. Clients don't always realize how much back-and-forth is involved, so be clear upfront about how many rounds of revisions you include in your rate.



Chapter Three

PRICING

THE PRICE OF COPYWRITING: DRAFTING

The Easiest Part to Estimate (But Don't Underestimate It)



How Fast Can You Write?

From a pure calculation perspective, drafting is the easiest part of the writing process to estimate. If you've done your research and have a solid outline, you can get a pretty good sense of your words per hour (WPH) and plan your pricing accordingly.

Of course, there are variables:

- If I'm familiar with the client or the topic, I write much faster than if I'm learning a new subject.
- If you're a beginner, assume you're slower than you think. This isn't a bad thing—it just means you need to price accordingly.
- Practice helps. If you don't know your speed, test yourself. Take a topic in a dream client's industry, outline it, and write 500–1,000 words to see how long it takes.

Why This Matters

Your effective hourly rate changes significantly if you're slower or faster than expected. If you price based on 500 WPH but actually write at 400 WPH, you're making 20% less per hour. And if you finish faster than expected, that's great—but only if you're not underpricing yourself to begin with.

Here's the breakdown of your effective hourly rate if your actual writing speed differs from your estimate.

Scenario:

- You want to pay yourself \$100 per hour
- You assume you can write 500 words per hour
- The project is a 2,000-word article
- You price it as a flat rate of 4 hours (\$400 total)

What Happens If Your Speed Changes?

- If you write at 400 WPH, the project takes 5 hours, and your effective hourly rate drops to \$80/hour
- At 500 WPH, you're right on target at \$100/hour
- If you write at 600 WPH, you finish in 3.33 hours, increasing your effective hourly to \$120/hour

Flat Fees Can Be Better

This is also why you may want to price by flat rate instead of hourly. If you do it by the hour, clients often ask "How many hours will it take?" and then you're still back to this kind of guess.

You also have less certainty around cash flow—you might write faster, which works against you because you will bill fewer hours due to being efficient. And yet, ironically, the better the writer you are the faster you will probably become. So you're working against your own interests.) Also, if the client suddenly says to stop billing time to a project, that income goal is effectively missed.



“The first draft is a skeleton. Just bare bones. The rest of the story comes later with revising.” – Judy Blume

Instead, I price by a flat rate. This ensures I can provide the deliverable, the client doesn't worry about a rising bill and I have cash flow certainty. And I use these calculations to determine what I have to do to ensure I hit my income goal.

Opportunity Cost

Copywriting work is binary: if you're working on this project, you can't work on that one. Every extra hour spent drafting reduces your availability for other (potentially higher-paying) work.

So, when pricing projects:

- Be realistic about your speed.
- Factor in research, outlining, and revisions—not just drafting time
- Remember the opportunity cost—long projects can eat up availability for other work.

Now, let's talk revisions and how to use your private revision time effectively, to keep your client revisions minimal.

Chapter Four

PRICING

THE PRICE OF COPYWRITING: REVISIONS

Refining Your Draft at a Faster Pace





“

Good stories are not written. They are rewritten.” – Phyllis Whitney

Revisions are where the magic happens—and the best part is that they’re typically much faster than writing a first draft. It’s easier to refine existing words than to create them from scratch. I usually think of revisions in two parts:

1. Private Revisions: These are the edits I make while moving from a rough working draft to a polished first draft to deliver to the client.
2. Client Revisions: These are changes based on feedback from the client after they’ve seen the draft.

The key is to invest enough time in your private revisions. When you nail down a strong, well-structured draft, you end up spending significantly less time on client revisions. If you spend more time refining your work before it reaches the client, the overall revision process is much smoother.

Estimating Revision Speed

- For beginners, if you're estimating your writing speed at 500 words per hour, you might want to budget about 750 words per hour for revisions—since you're not yet as efficient at spotting and fixing issues. For someone more experienced, like me, revising can be done at 1,000 words per hour (sometimes even 1,200–1,500 if everything's in good shape).
- Remember, these numbers don't have to be exact—they're a starting point for you to adjust as you get more practice. The most important thing is to be realistic about your pace. Pushing yourself to go faster than what feels authentic to your process can lead to burnout or subpar work.

Pro Tip: Embrace the Learning Curve

It's okay if these calculations mean you're effectively making around \$30 per hour as a beginner. This is part of your journey. By accepting your current speed and gradually improving, you're investing in your own talent. Over time, as you refine your process and build stronger client interviewing techniques, you'll be able to charge more—and work faster.

I charge far more than just the time it takes because I bring strong writing skills, polished client communication, and (almost) mastered organizing content effectively. With experience, you'll be able to offer a premium service that justifies a higher rate, all while increasing your efficiency.

Ultimately, the best strategy is to set your rates based on honest estimates of your time. That way, whether you're revising at 750 words per hour or 1,000, you'll know exactly how your effective hourly rate stacks up. Don't be discouraged by lower numbers at the start; every project is a step toward greater efficiency and higher earnings.

Client Revisions: Setting Boundaries

Revisions should be part of your pricing structure, but they shouldn't be unlimited. Clients will always have feedback, but if you've done a solid job on the first draft, the revisions should be relatively straightforward—tweaking a section, refining a sentence, or correcting a factual detail.

How Many Revisions to Include?

- For short-form pieces (under 2,000 words) → Allow one set of revisions.
- For anything up to 8,000 words → Allow two rounds of revisions.

- For longer projects (eBooks, whitepapers, 30,000+ word manuscripts) → It may be better to draft and revise one chapter at a time instead of tackling revisions all at once.

If you've written the first draft well, most revisions won't take long.

Clients typically get stuck on one specific section or need a minor structural tweak rather than rewriting large portions.



Estimating Time for Client Revisions

- Pieces under 2,000 words → I can usually complete revisions in an hour or less.
- For longer pieces → I estimate about an hour for every 2,000 words beyond that.

This structure helps prevent revision creep—where clients keep requesting small tweaks indefinitely—and keeps your time under control. It also gives clients a clear expectation of what's included in the price, so they know that extra revisions beyond what's agreed upon will cost more.

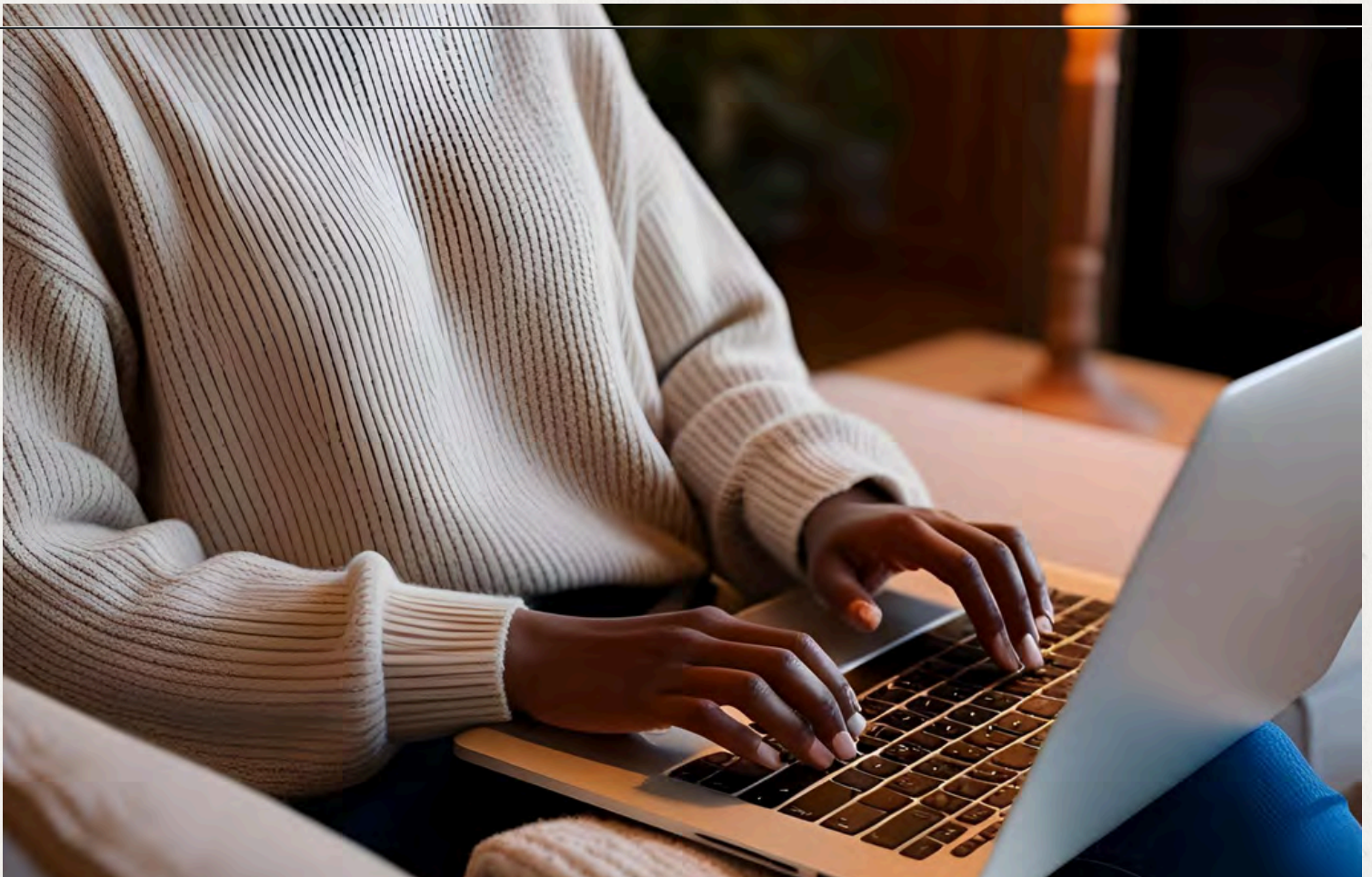
Revisions should be part of your workflow, but they shouldn't eat into your profit. If you price properly from the start, you won't feel like you're doing extra work for free when those inevitable revision requests come in.

Chapter Five

PRICING

THE PRICE OF COPYWRITING: CONSULT HOURS AND EXTRAS

The Hidden Time Drains That Can Eat into Your Profits



How Much Consultation Time to Include?

Consultations are necessary, but if you don't set boundaries, they can drag on and cut into your earnings. The key is efficient meetings that improve your outline and first draft, rather than endless back-and-forth discussions that don't add much value.

- For short-form content (like a blog post): One 30-minute session should be enough—unless you're planning a multi-blog strategy that needs to be cohesive.
- For long-form content (eBooks, whitepapers, website copy):
 - One-hour initial consultation to fully understand the project.
 - One 30-minute meeting after the first revision to discuss changes.
 - Second revision is usually handled by email—by this point, we're just tweaking a few final details.

Just like writing and revising, I price these meetings into my project rate because they are billable time. Even though consulting isn't writing, it's still time spent that prevents me from working on other projects. **Price based on the value you bring, not the effort required.** Things are "easier" for me because I'm an expert.

Final Notes: Are You Also Doing These Extras?

Some clients assume extra tasks are included in the writing rate, but they're not free work—they take time and expertise. And they can completely wreck your effective hourly rate if you're not careful. But you're not going to let that happen! Here's how.

"So the writer who breeds more words than he needs, is making a chore for the reader who reads."

- Dr. Seuss

If your project involves any of these, price accordingly:

- Proofreading – This is different from revising. Are you responsible for the final polish?
- Citations – Is the client expecting formal citations (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)?
- SEO Optimization – Did the client give you keywords, or are you expected to research and implement them?

Pro Tip: Using AI to Speed Up These Tasks (With Caution!)

- ChatGPT can be a great tool for proofreading and structuring citations—but you must proofread its output. If you're not skilled at prompting AI properly, don't rely on it.
- For SEO research, if the client didn't provide keywords, you can ask ChatGPT for short- and long-tail keyword suggestions and how to incorporate them into H2s and content flow. Again, **double-check everything**—it's a tool, not a replacement for strategic thinking.

Every extra task adds time to the project. The more strategic you are with pricing upfront, the more profitable your work will be.

Pro Tip: Charge for Your Expertise, Not Just Your Time

As you gain experience, you'll realize clients aren't just paying for words on a page—they're paying for your knowledge, your strategy, and the results you help them achieve. That's why seasoned copywriters can charge higher rates—not just because they write faster, but because their writing is more effective.

So don't be afraid to raise your rates over time. If you're improving your craft, streamlining your process, and delivering great results, your pricing should reflect that. It's not about the time, it's about the value. Get paid what you're worth.





The Copywriter Calculator

If this feels like a lot of data to track, you're right! It took me years to refine my pricing. Once I did, my profits tripled because I was pricing based on data—not guesses.

To make this easier, I created The Copywriter Calculator—a tool that lets you:

01

CUSTOMIZE TO YOUR COPYWRITING PROJECT

Enter the parameters of your project (total word count, research time, revision rounds, etc.)

02

PROVIDES GUIDANCE ON WORD COUNT

Adjust different estimates to test pricing strategies, based on your drafting speed, revision speed and level of expertise.

03

FLAT FEE? CHECK YOUR EFFECTIVE HOURLY

Input an estimated project price and see your effective hourly rate before committing. If you're being paid \$1000 but it's going to take you 50 hours, you're only making \$20 per hour. Don't make this mistake.

04

GET AN HOURLY RATE RECOMMENDATION

Want to set an hourly rate but need to know the total hours expected. Input the details and get the total hours and price for the whole project.

THANK YOU!

We appreciate you choosing this workbook and hope it has been a valuable resource for you. Continue to challenge yourself, learn, and grow.

Farewell for now!



5hundredwords



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THE END